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26 September 1979

Latin America Report

(FOUO 9/79)

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LATIN AMERICA REPORT

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INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

ETA IN BRAZIL--With the aim of organizing South Americans of Basque origin, ETA [Basque Fatherland and Liberty Group] has just established itself in Brazil where the PLO will itself open an office. The PLO and the leftist Montoneros have concluded an agreement for joint action in Argentina.
[Text] [Paris VALEUR ACTUELLES in French 23 Jul 79 p 20]

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CUBA

MENGISTU, RAUL CASTRO HONOR INTERNATIONAL COMBATANTS

Medals Ceremony

Havana PRELA in English 1630 GMT 2 Sep 79 PA

[Text] Havana, 2 Sep (PL)--The president of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) of Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam, decorated here several internationalist combatants who participated in the Ethiopian liberation war.

The PMAC president is in Cuba at the head of a delegation from his country to participate in the sixth summit conference of the non-aligned countries, to commence tomorrow in the Convention Palace of this capital.

The Army General Raul Castro, minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba (FAR), presided over the ceremony held yesterday in the "Maximo Gomez" School of the FAR, in the outskirts of the capital.

Mengistu delivered medals to a group of brigade generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors, sergeants, soldiers and reserve members participating in the Ethiopian armed struggle against foreign invasion.

It was a very moving moment when Mengistu handed plaques to relatives of Captains Roberto Pulido, Raul Hernandez and soldiers Juan Collazo and Enrique Mendez, killed in combat in that African country.

Mengistu and Raul Castro referred to the historic identity of the struggles waged by the Cuban and Ethiopian peoples for their independence and to the ties of friendship and solidarity which unite both nations.

After expressing his satisfaction over being in Cuba for the third time, Mengistu expressed that the decision of the Cuban Government to send men to Ethiopia was a difficult but historic, firm and revolutionary task.

He emphasized that the attitude of the Cubans constitutes an example for peace-loving peoples and reiterated his pain and that of the

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Ethiopian people for those who offered their lives while fulfilling a duty far from their homeland.

The leader of the Ethiopian revolution said that he will remember this day as something very special and explained that while imperialism exists similar sacrifices will have to be made.

The Cuban minister of the FAR expressed his appreciation, for his part, for Mengistu's gesture of personally delivering the medals and added that it represents, beyond recognition, a new commitment with the Ethiopian revolution firmly steered by its top leader.

Raul Castro referred to the traditions of struggle, to the vocation for liberty and the heroism of the Ethiopian people, while also underscoring that the friendship and identity between the two countries will be even further strengthened facing international reaction.

In the name of the Cuban Government and people, he reiterated the decision to always do whatever is necessary to return the gesture of the Ethiopian Government, which he rated as a stimulus for the building of socialism and the consolidation of internationalism.

Text of Mengistu Speech

Havana PRELA in English 2040 GMT 2 Sep 79 PA

[Text] Havana, 2 Sep (PL)--The president of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) of Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam, affirmed that Cuba fulfilled its duty through sending men to aid in the combat against the foreign attack against this country.

PRENSA LATINA will transmit the text of the speech made by the president of the PMAC in an act held yesterday at the "Maximo Gomez" Academy of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, in honor of the decoration by the Ethiopian Government, of Cuban officers and soldiers, participants in the war against the foreign invasion.

Comrade Raul, dear comrades, sisters and brothers:

"On my third visit to this free and heroic Latin American land, am and [as received] being among the beloved sister people and their revolutionary leaders, we Ethiopians cannot find words to express the great satisfaction and emotion we feel.

"We will remember this day as an unforgettable special occasion."

"The fact that we are again in this country, among the members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, who helped us at moments when Ethiopia was being shaken by the revolution, and in all directions,

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waging a heated struggle against the reactionary hordes coordinated by imperialism, and the opportunity to speak to the relatives of the Cuban heroes who sacrificed their lives for the Ethiopian revolution, makes this day a very special event for us.

"We believe that through sending its sons to combat in Ethiopia, Cuba adopted an extremely difficult decision, difficult due to its possible repercussions and for the responsibility and sacrifices it implies.

"It was a decision of great importance, a historic, firm and revolutionary decision.

"The sons of revolutionary Cuba, who were entrusted the mission of executing this historic and revolutionary decision, fulfilled with duty in a manner which brings honor to the proletariat of the world and to peace-loving people.

"I don't think that my speech can alleviate the anguish of the children who have lost their fathers, of the comrades who have lost their beloved, of the parents who have lost their sons. That is why I feel so much pain.

"While the forces of destruction, aggression, exploitation and oppression still exist, the peoples will have to accept such sacrifices. And the Cubans know this better than anyone.

"I want to express to the relatives of those who fell that their heroes are also ours, and that their heroes fell in combat together with many Ethiopian heroes and the object of the sacrifice was to defend an authentic and just revolution.

"As I already said, I have no words adequate enough to express my deep sentiments. To pay the debt we have acquired with those who fell on the battlefield, it is necessary to die like them, sacrificing in the name of duty."

"We thank you for having accepted these medals and mementos which are symbols of our unity in struggle, testimonies of our participation in combat, which we have presented in the name of the Ethiopian people and our revolutionary armed forces.

"Far from being a compensation, what we have presented constitutes a means of expressing my feelings. I hope you will accept it.

"Long live the unity between the armed forces of Cuba and Ethiopia.

"Long live the unity between the peoples of Ethiopia and Cuba.

"The world will belong to the proletariat.

"Thank you."

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Raul Castro Remarks

Havana Domestic Service in Spanish 1045 GMT 3 Sep 79 FL

[Excerpt] On behalf of the party, government, FAR combatants and all the people, Army Gen Raul Castro thanked Mengistu's gesture in decorating the comrades who participated in the recent struggle of the Ethiopian people. He stressed that the friendship between the two peoples, the identity between our revolutions and the militant brotherhood between the two armies are sealed with blood.

[Begin Castro recording] The sands of the Ogaden and the plains of Harar, the passages of (Sheleve) and (Harabi), the mountains of (Leguenahi) and (Golocha) and the accesses to Jijiga are, above all, exponents of the heroism, patriotism and revolutionary awareness of the Ethiopian masses. They are symbols of the combat glory of the armed forces of socialist Ethiopia. These regions, which became the scenes of victorious combats to safeguard the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and preserve the government of the revolution, today are the patrimony of the common cause of nations, the cause of national independence, the cause of socialism and internationalism, therefore, they will be cited whenever an example will be given of the heroism of a nation that fought and won. [end recording]

Army Gen Raul Castro emphasized the combat traditions of that fraternal nation, its desire for peace and its heroism. He pointed out that for Cubans it was an honor to fight on the side of such a courageous people, adding that with it we expanded our revolutionary consciousness and we became more internationalist and better communists.

The FAR minister also referred to the efforts which the Ethiopian people are making to build their country peacefully. He added that Cuban doctors and technicians along with other specialists of the socialist community are making their solidary contribution to the creative work of the revolution in that country. He then stated that the passing of years and growth of socialist Ethiopia will convert the miseries left by the imperialists and fascists into a past from which no return is possible.

[Begin Castro recording] You [Mengistu] can be absolutely certain that this decoration from now on will be a source of renewed stimulus for all of us for the building of socialism and in fulfilling our internationalist duties. On behalf of all, we contract with you this commitment which constitutes the only real means of expressing our sincere gratitude and responding to such a generous gesture. Eternal glory to the heroes who died for socialist Ethiopia. Long live the eternal friendship between the peoples of Ethiopia and Cuba. [shouts of 'Viva'] Long live the great leader of the Ethiopian people, Mengistu Haile Mariam. [shouts of 'Viva'] Long live Fidel. [shouts of 'Viva'] Fatherland or death. [shouts of 'Venceremos'] [end recording]

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CUBA

FRENCH PUBLICATION SEES CUBAN EXPANSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Paris VALEURS ACTUELLES in French 23 Jun 79 pp 27-28

[Article by Pierre and Renee Gosset: "The Cubans Are Here"]

[Text] Fidel Castro is now in power in Nicaragua.
All of Central America is threatened--including
Mexico. This is how--

"It is obvious that if Nicaragua, once liberated, asks for our assistance, we will not ignore her request," said Fidel Castro last week. The Somoza government in Nicaragua was dissolved last Tuesday.

Henry Kissinger is telling a story in Washington these days which sheds light rather well on what happened. He says he was in Acapulco several months ago when the Mexican president, Lopez Portillo, asked him to come see him. Portillo confided to the former secretary of state that he was perplexed by a conversation he had had with President Carter when he visited Mexico.

Portillo had told Carter: "You know that I do not particularly like Somoza nor his regime. But if the sandinistas overthrow him and replace him with a Cuban regime, it will have a profound effect on the neighboring countries, and will surely provoke a push to the left here."

What was Carter's response? "As if he had not heard a word of my warning," Portillo confided to Kissinger, "all he said was, 'Oh, Mr President, you must do something to help me get rid of this Somoza.'"

It was obvious then that the White House did not behave any differently toward its most loyal ally in Central America than with the shah of Iran.

Post-Somoza promises nothing good in this part of the world. But for Mexico, the consequences were immediate. A few months after his meeting with Carter, President Portillo received Fidel Castro with every honor and praise--a Fidel Castro in a position to become the leading personality of the region. And, for the first time in decades, the communist party saw its political existence in Mexico officially recognized, with the possibility of running a candidate for the presidency.

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That is the beginning of an ambitious enterprise handled very skillfully up to now, the outline of which (according to the CIA) was exposed by Castro in March, when he met in Havana for 4 days with the major sandinista leaders who were beginning to have a serious chance of taking him to Nicaragua, on condition that their three rival factions rally around Daniel Ortega Savedra and the maquisards around Eden Pastora, the legendary "Commandant Zero," both strict Marxists.

But the Cuban "Liber Maximo" warned them: "The days of the frontal attack, of Marxism sweeping in Che-style, are gone. It failed in Bolivia and Venezuela. Let us remember my own beginnings. At this point the Americans are so haunted by the thought of a second Cuba in your country that they have forgotten how they created the first one..."

As to taking his word, 25 years ago this as yet unknown Castro came down from the Maestra Sierra to overthrow President Batista and assured the New York and Chicago journalists who came running that he "had never been, was not, and never would be a communist."

In order that they, too, create the illusion, the sandinistas will therefore have to recruit into their junta more bourgeois elements and a member of the clergy, all opposed to Somoza.

On the other hand, Cuba cannot openly aid the rebels. An additional show of interventionism, especially in this part of the world, could be intolerable to the United States, and disastrous on the threshold of the nonaligned conference at Havana.

An indirect way will be found--Panama will serve as a facade. The Panamanians will play the role of the "Cubans' Cubans." The ex-consul of Panama to Miami, Edgardo Lopez, reveals how all the various arms, even including mortars and heavy machine guns, paid for by Cuba, have been dispatched to a mythical "hunting and fishing club" at Panama, on Panamanian military planes. And from there to the Liberia airfield in Costa Rica, on the Nicaraguan border.

Likewise, the several hundred guerrillas trained in Cuba will be camouflaged in a "Panamanian brigade," fighting side by side with the sandinistas and also including, somewhat ironically, antisubversive war experts formed by U.S. Green Berets in the Panama canal zone.

Despite the denials of Commandant Zero--"The best aid I can give you is no aid," Fidel Castro told me"--Washington is not fooled.

"Havana is furnishing arms, munitions and training to the sandinistas," says the spokesman for the Department of State.

"There is increasing evidence of Cuban involvement in Nicaragua," adds Cyrus Vance, secretary of state.

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President Carter himself denounces "the Cuban game in Central American and the Caribbean."

There is proof that during a meeting at San Jose, capital of Costa Rica, Havana took control of the Salvadorian and Guatemalan insurgents, to reorganize them along the Nicaraguan model into the "people's revolutionary army" and the "rebel armed forces," both owing allegiance to Cuba.

And last 18 June, Robert Pastor, expert on Latin America to the White House National Security Council, sent the U.S. President this unsettling message: "The Cubans are everywhere"--the prime ministers of Tobago, Trinidad, Saint Kitts and Nevis, afraid of suffering the fate undergone recently by their colleague from Grenada.

However, always seeking a new Bakhtiar, the United States is nibbling the bait, just as Castro foresaw..

"This time the United States will not tell us how to set up our government," says Father d'Escoto in Costa Rica, future minister of foreign affairs in a sandinistan Nicaragua and leftist priest from an U.S. seminary.

How could any doubt still exist? In Grenada, whose neighboring West Indian islands fear the contagion, the new prime minister, Maurice Bishop, leader of the "new jewel" party (which has forbidden "any nuance of leftism"), turned to Havana to request arms and military counselors and to establish close economic ties with Cuba.

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